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Reconciliation as a controversial symbol

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Abstract

This study entails a conceptual analysis of “reconciliation” as one of the guiding concepts in Christian discourse in the South African context. It is abundantly clear from the literature that reconciliation is understood in very different ways. This is observed from publications beginning in the 1960s. Since that time it is often used to offer theological reflection on social conflict in the country. In this study, I propose a framework in which one can identify, describe and assess at least three distinct ways in which the reconciliation concept is understood in theological literature emanating from South Africa. I describe them as a) Justice through reconciliation in Jesus Christ, b) Justice and reconciliation after liberation and c) Reconstruction requires national reconciliation. The famous *Christus Victor* typology of the three main “types” of atonement developed by the Swedish theologian, Gustaf Aulén is used as a background to these approaches. The purpose of this study is to aid continued theological reflection on the basis of a conceptual analysis of creative ways in which the reconciliation concept is used in a Christian context. This study is an attempt to offer a constructive reinterpretation of reconciliation in contemporary South Africa.